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WHAT HAVE WE LEARNED ABOUT FLES.

BY- RANDALL, EARLE S.
DEPARTMENT OF AUDIOVISUAL INSTRUCTION, WASH., D.C.

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THE ROLE OF THE CLASSROOM ELEMENTARY TEACHER IN FLES PROGRAMS IS DISCUSSED WITH SPECIAL REFERENCE TO FLES TELEVISION COURSES. HER IMPORTANCE IN PROVIDING FOLLOW-UP TO THE PROGRAMS AND HER NEED FOR ADEQUATE MANUALS, RECORDINGS, AND OTHER INSTRUCTIONAL AIDS IS STRESSED IN THE FINDINGS OF THREE RESEARCH PROJECTS. SOME OF THE AVAILABLE FLES TELEVISION AND FILM SERIES ARE IDENTIFIED. THIS ARTICLE APPEARED IN "AUDIOVISUAL INSTRUCTION," VOLUME 7, NUMBER 9, NOVEMBER 1962, PAGES 627-629. (AF)

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What Have We Learned About FLES?

Earle S. Randall

THE FLES MOVEMENT (Foreign Languages in the Elementary School) is about 10 years old. In its lusty growth, it has raised new questions faster than the old ones could be answered. In the first place, the demand for teachers is out of all proportion to the supply. Secondly, no one is quite sure what the best FLES teaching arrangement is: specialists, classroom teachers, or a combination of the two.

Some leading language educators refuse to countenance FLES without specialist teachers, but popular demand has prompted many school systems to provide a FLES program, even though they cannot employ specialists to do all of the teaching. Even where specialists are available, the issue is not clear-cut. For in the elementary school, there is a very close relationship between teacher and children. Specialists come into the classroom for certain subjects, but the classroom teacher often conducts follow-up activities. Her very attitude toward the subject taught by the visiting specialist is important to the children's learning.

These factors have an important bearing on media and materials in FLES work. So does the fact that, by general agreement, FLES starts with an entirely audio-lingual method: hear, then speak, with reading and writing postponed for a considerable period. This excludes the conventional textbook.

Where schools employ specialists only, the need for new materials and the use of the new media are less urgent, though even here visual and auditory materials

The author is professor of modern languages, Purdue University, Lafayette, Indiana.

broaden the effectiveness of the work by bringing a number of native speakers and authentic samples of foreign cultures into the classroom. This article is, however, concerned mainly with the non-specialist teacher—the classroom teacher, whose professional qualities as a teacher are so much needed in the close relationship with her elementary pupils. How can she be prepared to conduct FLES follow-up? What can she learn to do herself and what aids can be put into her hands?

The significance of these questions is enhanced by the fact that the single, most important development to supplement FLES teaching has been the TV courses that have sprung up across the country. Successful televised FLES work requires careful preparation in two areas. The first is self-evident: a capable staff must plan and teach the TV lessons, aided by a producer-director versed in the objectives of instructional television. This area, unfortunately though understandably, often demands so much of the staff's time that the second—preparing aids for the non-specialist teacher to conduct successful follow-up—is slighted.

First of all, teachers' manuals are indispensable, and they must be detailed. Lesson by lesson, there must be specific instructions: How do you teach and drill a dialogue? How do you re-enter material for additional practice? How do you operate with a real minimum of English and without translating?

Manuals are printed, but languages are spoken. So there must be a supplement to the manual: there must be recordings. The earlier notion that recordings need only present the lesson content is gradually changing; much of the needed drill material can be recorded, thus assuring its skillful preparation and its availability for in-school use and home study. The idea that home-work must always be done from a book is being modified. (And this is true, not only for children's home-work. Recordings are being used also to give teachers linguistic pointers and methodological models.)

Should the pupils have books? The answer is not yet agreed upon. It is generally accepted that the written word should wait until material has been thoroughly learned through oral presentation, but how long should the waiting period be? Language teachers have noted a feeling on the part of fifth- and sixth-graders that a subject not dignified by a textbook is not to be taken seriously. Akin to the seal of academic approval which a textbook bestows is the question of tests. Parents and teachers alike generally assume that if a subject isn't tested, it isn't considered very important. So there must be tests, and the televised FLES course must provide them.

Where do we stand at present with respect to this team teaching of FLES? The televised lessons are, I think, improving steadily. Much slower is the advance in attaining good follow-up. The types of aids mentioned already exist in varying arrangements and degrees of completeness as part of the televised FLES programs. But there is a general difficulty. ETV stations are only beginning to realize that instructional TV, that is, formal TV teaching in the schools, makes a new kind of demand on the TV station and that it requires regular contact between school and TV personnel if follow-up is to be conducted effectively.

In any evaluation, we must keep in mind that FLES television teaching is still in the pioneering stage. There has been a tremendous amount of duplication in the programs, and a general lack of communication between them. There has been a great investment of ingenuity in lieu of money, for these were shoe-string programs. While the pioneering period is not over, there is fortunately a movement toward consolidation. There are now large TV programs across the country: Spanish programs in California and Florida, the French and Spanish FLES work of Midwest Airborne, and *Parlons Français*, which has radiated across the country from its starting point in Boston. Extensive financial support from the U.S. Office of Education and various foundations has made much of this work possible—for which we have cause to be profoundly grateful.

What has research to say about these televised courses? None of the three major research projects now under way will answer the layman's question: Should we teach foreign languages by television? But they will give information to help the layman (and schoolmen) answer the question for their own schools. Let us review these projects briefly.

Parlons Français

Research has been completed on the first two years of televised instruction provided by *Parlons Français*. The researchers studied the effect of three factors on children's learning: the fluency of the classroom teacher; the kind of follow-up practiced; and the televised teachers' programs. Some 40 classes were involved.

The study planned varying arrangements for follow-up, taking into account whether the classroom teacher was moderately fluent or non-fluent in French. In-service preparation of teachers through work with recordings and televised lessons was prescribed accordingly. The stress here is clearly on follow-up, and the findings point to some practical advice.

Here are some of the conclusions taken from the research reports:

- Televised instruction alone without appropriate follow-up by the teacher is largely ineffective.
- Tape recordings may be used in follow-up work carried out by either non-fluent or moderately fluent teachers to achieve results comparable to those obtained by teachers directing their own practice.
- Where the program had decisive administrative support and teacher interest, it was generally successful, but where interest was low, performance of classes was more uncertain.
- Where it was possible to compare over the two-year period classroom work carried out by a moderately fluent teacher and a non-fluent teacher, statistically significant differences were observed in favor of the moderately fluent teacher. (In light of this last finding, the report adds: "Regular provision for in-service training is necessary.") (1)

University of Illinois Program

Preliminary reports are also available on the first two years of research on the Foreign Language Instruction Program of the University of Illinois. In the second year of the program, two fifth grades taught Spanish by TV one day a week and by their classroom teachers

using tape recordings four days a week were contrasted with two fifth grades taught by a specialist in Spanish. Research revealed that the contrast group (the one taught by the specialist) received higher mean scores than the experimental group on all Spanish achievement tests. However, the scores of the experimental group ranged from 85 percent to 98 percent of those obtained by the contrast group. The girls obtained significantly higher mean scores than the boys, and the pupils with higher IQs tended to do better on the achievement tests than those with lower IQs. (2)

Denver-Stanford Research Project

The third research project, involving by far the largest number of children (6,000), is being conducted jointly by the Denver Schools and the Institute of Communication Research of Stanford University, with Kenneth E. Oberholtzer and Wilbur Schramm as principal investigators. The project is studying the effect of various kinds of follow-up. Each of six groups, at fifth-grade level, sees three weekly televised Spanish lessons. Group 1 merely watches the television program. Group 2 watches it a second time at home. Groups 3, 4, and 5 see the television program, and in addition, have various types of classroom follow-up. Group 6 views the television lessons a second time at night with parents. Classroom teachers of Groups 3, 4, and 5 have usually had some Spanish instruction; teachers of Groups 1, 2, and 6 generally have had none.

First-semester tests showed that Group 2 performed significantly better than Group 1, Group 6 performed significantly better than Group 2, and each of the classroom practice groups performed significantly better than Group 6. Tests at the end of the second semester (after Group 1 had been eliminated as showing little promise) indicated the same relative performance in all the other five groups. The report states: "Evidently the presence of parents during the viewing at home was motivating in some way. Motivation is also suggested by the larger percentage watching." (3) The TV situation in which pupils view lessons at home with parents is thus obviously a field for further study.

If we consider the results of these three projects, it seems fair to say that televised FLES teaching can be successful; that follow-up is essential; and that classroom teachers can, with audiovisual aids and training, conduct this follow-up effectively.

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From television to film is but a step. Each has certain characteristics. Film may be more expensive at present though new cost arrangements are continually being worked out and modified. Film scheduling for individual schools can be more flexible than TV scheduling. Film offers color while TV, in general, still does not. Eight-millimeter film is already in use and further development will surely reduce its cost while maintaining good picture and sound quality.

There is at present one complete teaching "system" for French FLES. *Parlons Français* is available both in television and film versions, each with extensive aids for guiding classroom follow-up. Other such courses will undoubtedly follow.

There are also on the market sets of filmstrips with accompanying recordings which sometimes represent a complete course, sometimes not. The *En Classe* series by Coronet, for instance, provides 20 lessons, with filmstrips and records, on subjects of interest to children. These are planned as a first year of FLES work, and the teachers' guide is carefully developed. Some of the other sets are designed as only parts of the whole course of study, the choice of the rest being left to the teacher.

Among available recorded materials for supplementary work is the HRS series (Hear-Repeat-Speak), a group of dialogues in several languages, recorded by children for children. I have been told that these records were developed to be sold in department and toy stores. When the authors found that they were being used in schools, they wrote a guide to aid the teacher. A clear case of demand creating supply.

If you are a teacher, you perhaps ask yourself sometimes at the end of a successful course, why you think the class made progress. Probably your answer is that you reached a given point in the class texts or your students did well on standard tests. These teaching materials gave you not only a selected body of content to be learned but also a scale for measuring achievment. FLES teachers are only beginning to have such materials to guide them. It would help them, for example, to have a wider choice of programs of study in the form of teachers' guides. The pioneering guides of the Modern Language Association, in several languages and at various levels, still stand alone for breadth of coverage. They have recordings of their linguistic content, but more elaborate exercise materials might well be supplied in recorded form also.

The FLES movement has profited by the bold pioneering of some and by words of prudent caution of others. New approaches are being developed and their results checked and modified by research. This seems to me a healthy situation, one we should all encourage. For it is obvious that FLES teachers need more teaching tools and much more information about how to use them.

Notes

1. From: *Summary of Research on Parlons Français, Year Two* by Ralph Garry and Edna Mauriello (Modern Language Project, 9 Newbury Street, Boston 16, Mass.)
2. From: *Preliminary Report II* by Charles E. Johnson, Joseph S. Flores, and Fred P. Ellison. (Foreign Language Instruction Project, 805 West Pennsylvania Avenue, Urbana, Ill.)
3. From: *Results of the First Year's Research in the Denver-Stanford Project* by John L. Hayman, Jr., and James T. Johnson, Jr. (School District No. 1, City and County of Denver, Denver, Colo., or, Institute for Communication Research, Stanford University, Stanford, Calif.) [Though they fall outside the immediate limits of this article, two recent publications of great interest should be mentioned. The first is J. Richard Reid's survey of foreign language teaching by television, prepared for and available from, the Modern Language Association. The second is the book, *French in the Elementary School: Five Years' Experience*, by Harold B. Dunkel and Roger A. Pillet. (University of Chicago Press.)]